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Imagery analysis report

Summary of Construction Activity at Hoedspruit New Airfield, South Africa August 1977—January 1981 (S)

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SUMMARY OF CONSTRUCTION ACTIVITY AT HOEDSPRUIT NEW AIRFIELD, SOUTH AFRICA AUGUST 1977 – JANUARY 1981 (S)

1. (S/D) This report summarizes construction activity observed at Hoedspruit New Airfield (BE) from August 1977 to January 1981. Hoedspruit—South Africa's only airfield with hardened facilities—is strategically located in the eastern Transvaal, approximately 50 nautical miles (nm) from the Mozambique border. This airfield—along with Waterkloof Airfield and Pietersburg Airfield ( )—is one of the three main South African Air Force (SAAF) fighter bases (Figure 1). All three house Permanent Force units and provide air defense for South Africa's industrial heartland. Because of its location and extensive hardened facilities, Hoedspruit Airfield will probably be the major tactical fighter base for the SAAF when completed. It will probably house Mirage and MB-326 (Impala) aircraft.[1]

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2. (S/D) The airfield (Figure 2) was first observed in an early stage of construction in August 1977. By July 1978, the approximately 4,300- by 45-meter blacktop runway was operational. Fighter aircraft, however, were not observed until when one Mirage III/V and one MB-326 (Impala) were identified. As many as five Mirage III/V have been observed at the airfield.

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3. (S/D) In July 1978, nine hangarettes were under construction. This was the first identification of hangarettes in South Africa. Since then, 13 more have been completed and construction has been observed in progress on three more hangarettes. Additional hardened facilities include an earth-covered operations/control bunker with an observation tower, dispersed POL storage bunkers with underground fuel lines to the aircraft parking areas, and revetted drive-through ammunition storage bunkers. Also, the aircraft maintenance hangars/repair facilities and engine test building appear to have prefabricated concrete roofs.

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4. (S/D) Construction is continuing at a moderate pace. Since July 1978, in addition to hangarette construction, three new POL storage bunkers, a firing-in butt, and at least nine support buildings (some still under construction) have been built. In addition, the fence-secured ammunition/high explosives storage area has undergone expansion and at least 21 new storage bunkers have been observed under construction, bringing the total to 37. At least five masts (two with Yagi-type antennas on top) have been added to the communications facilities. Air warning (AW) radar has not been identified at the airfield; however, Mariepskop AW Radar Facility ( ) is approximately 15 nm southwest of the airfield.

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REFERENCES

IMAGERY

(S) All interpretable satellite imagery from August 1977 to January 1981 was used to prepare this report.

DOCUMENTS

1. DOD. IIR 6 880 0217, *New South African Air Force Base,* 23 May 77 (UNCLASSIFIED)

2. NPIC. IIR-047/78, *Hangarette Construction at Hoedspruit Airfield New, South Africa,* 25 Jul 78 (TOP SECRET)

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*Extracted information is classified SECRET

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(S) Comments and queries regarding this report are welcome. They may be directed to Third World Forces Division, Imagery Exploitation Group, NPIC,

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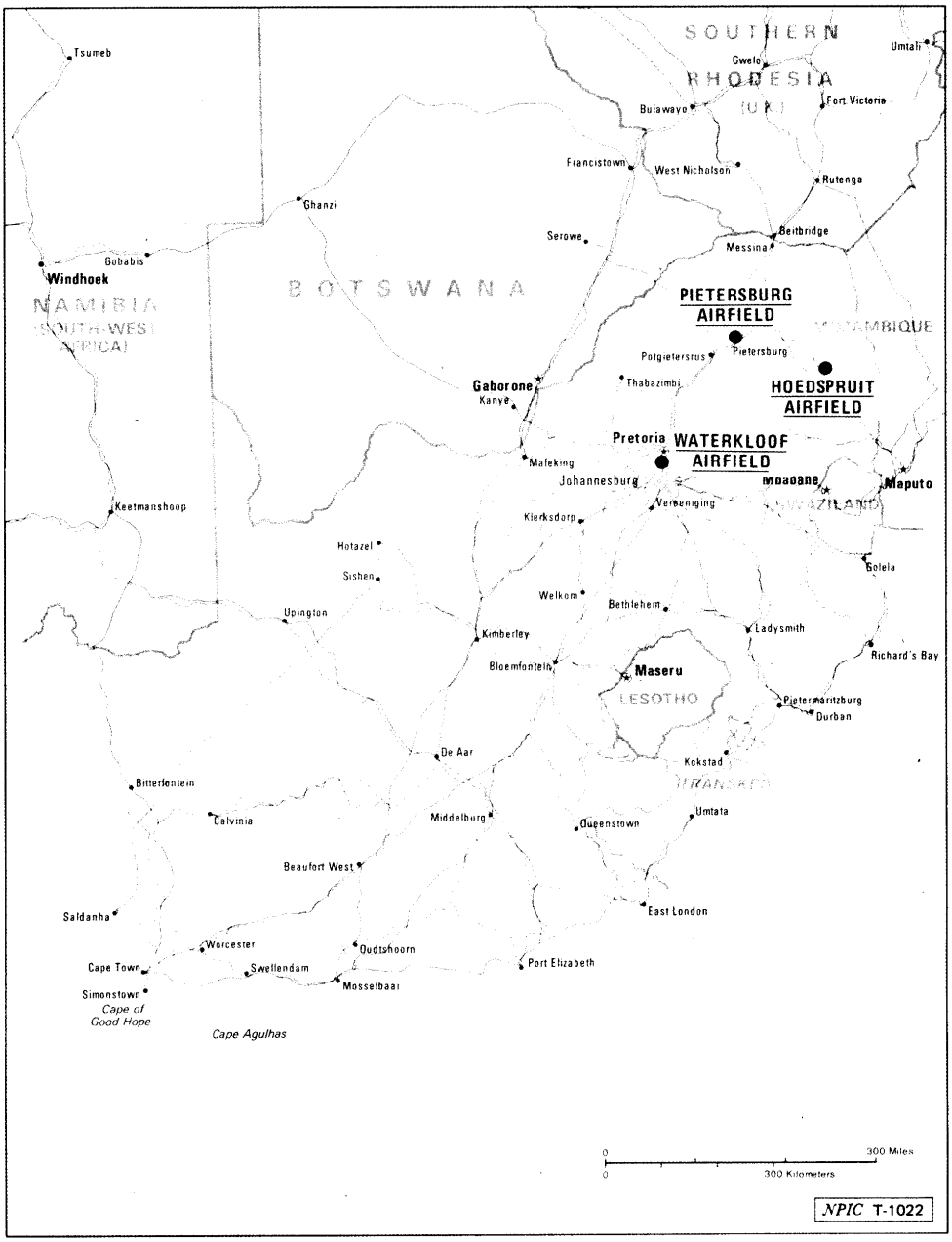

FIGURE 1. LOCATIONS OF FIGHTER AIRCRAFT BASES, SOUTH AFRICA

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